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The President's Daily Brief

24 January 1969

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~~*Top Secret*~~

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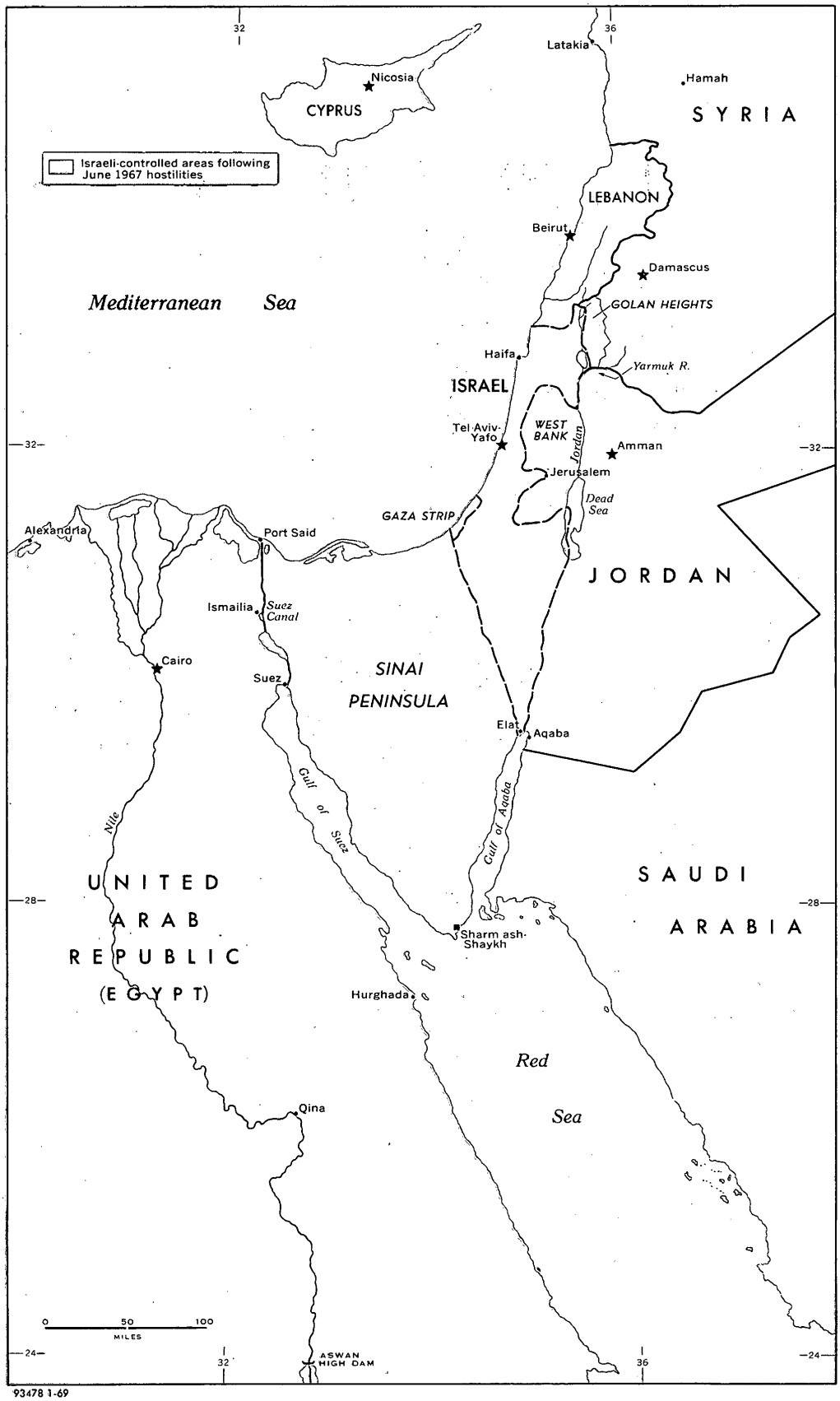

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I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

MIDDLE EAST

Gunnar Jarring, obviously worried about the impact of the great power consultations proposed by France, told a US Embassy officer in Moscow on 22 January that the Soviets had reassured him that they wanted to see his mission continue and the Security Council remain engaged in the Middle East problem. [redacted] 50X1

[redacted] 50X1

Jarring had intended to renew his individual talks with Eban and the Arab foreign ministers in Europe in mid-February. The great power talks--if they materialize--may cause some further slippage in these plans.

U Thant is also anxious to keep the UN's hand in in the search for a Middle East settlement. He told Ambassador Yost on 23 January that, even though he thought four-power talks would be "appropriate and useful," the participants should meet "explicitly as permanent members of the Security Council."

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EUROPE

A high Belgian official says the European Community is moving "straight toward" adoption of a tax on soybeans and related products. US companies annually sell about $500 million worth of these products in Community countries. Community officials see the tax as a necessity, despite the outcry they know it will cause, in order to deal with growing butter surpluses in Western Europe. This question may come up in next week's Council of Ministers meeting, which will also open a new round of bitter haggling over the Community's own agricultural policies.

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SOVIET AFFAIRS

The latest tally shows that more than 75 new SA-3 low-altitude surface-to-air missile sites have been built in the USSR and at Soviet installations in Eastern Europe since mid-1967, when deployment of this system was resumed. Deployment had been suspended in 1965, after about 100 sites had been built.

The resumption of deployment may have resulted from a review of Soviet air defense requirements, including an examination of US fighter-bomber tactics in Vietnam. In addition, the original SA-3 system may have been improved. Testing of the missile continued after 1965.

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[redacted] 50X1

[redacted] preparations are 50X1 being made--under tight security wraps--for an international conference to be held in East Berlin from 28 through 31 January. This could be the often-postponed meeting of the Warsaw Pact's political leaders, or possibly a summit conference of the members of the Council for Economic Mutual Assistance (CEMA).

In either case, the discussions will probably center on steps to re-establish unity under Moscow's leadership. It will be a difficult meeting regardless of whether the emphasis is military or economic, because of strong diversity of views among the participants. [redacted] 50X1

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Preparations continue for the funeral tomorrow of the young suicide victim, Jan Palach. There is no other public demonstration under way except for the silent thousands filing by the coffin, which is placed beneath a statue of Jan Hus, an early hero of Czechoslovakia's fight for independence. Five minutes of silence was observed at noon in Prague factories and in the main squares. The government has announced that yet another young man, the seventh, set himself on fire yesterday.

Few policemen are in evidence, and there is apparently no truth to rumors that substantial Soviet forces are moving back into Prague. Nevertheless, disquiet over possible anti-Soviet disturbances tomorrow continues. Today's appeal by Dubcek for law and order was seconded by student leaders who warned of provocations, but neither Dubcek nor the students could guarantee to control the populace.

VIETNAM

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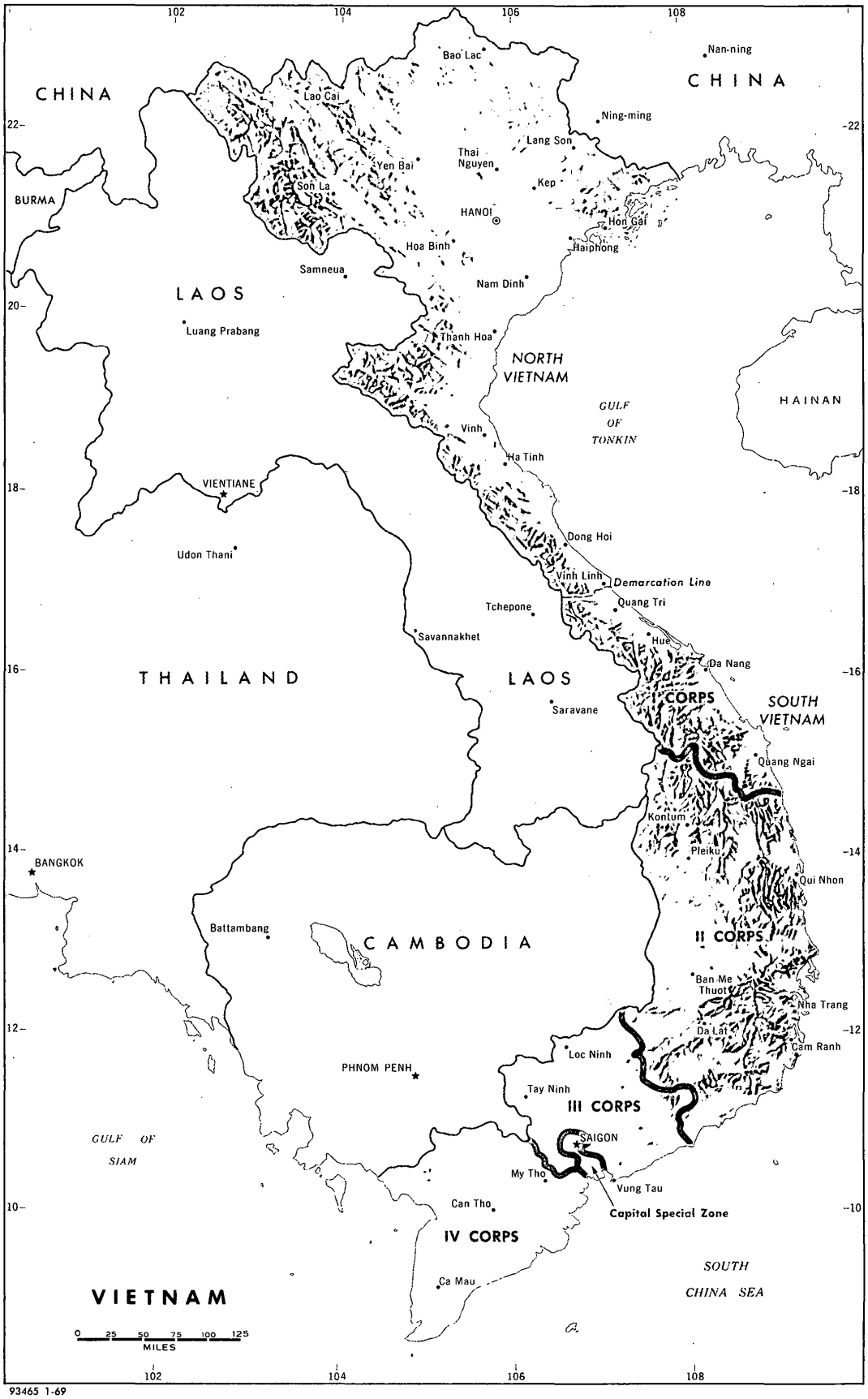

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Although no major ground engagements or shellings occurred in South Vietnam on 23-24 January, allied forces continued to encounter stiff enemy resistance to a cordon operation in southern coastal I Corps.

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II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

PERU

The generals will be meeting before the end of January to decide whether to retain Velasco in the presidency, and it appears that the moderates who oppose Velasco's noisy nationalism have the upper hand. Their leader, Prime Minister Montagne, has said more than once, however, that he would prefer to leave Velasco in office for a few months to absorb the economic and political repercussions of the expropriation of the International Petroleum Company. We consider it fairly certain that Velasco will eventually be replaced, but we have no good indication when this will take place.

NIGERIA

At annex is a discussion of the worsening situation in Nigeria.

SOUTH KOREA

President Pak's supporters, looking toward the 1971 elections, have launched a program to eliminate the constitutional barrier to a third term and to neutralize the opposition. Leaders of his party have decided to introduce a constitutional amendment in the National Assembly this May and to hold a national referendum in August--when the potentially volatile students are dispersed on

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Pak himself has not publicly committed himself on the third term issue. His supporters, however, by getting an early start hope to put him in a position where refusal would be difficult. Whether they can minimize opposition and avoid a national political crisis depends largely on the manner in which their campaign is carried out. Heavy-handed tactics against politicians, students and the press would almost certainly benefit opposition forces.

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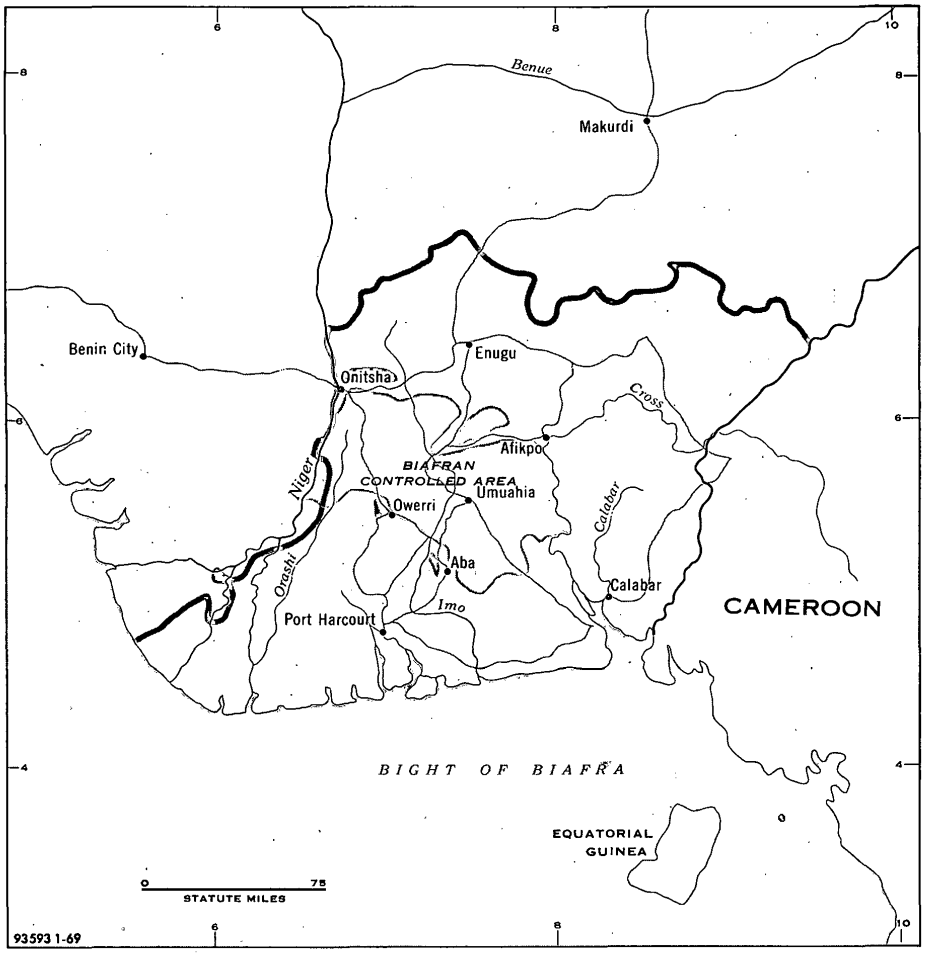

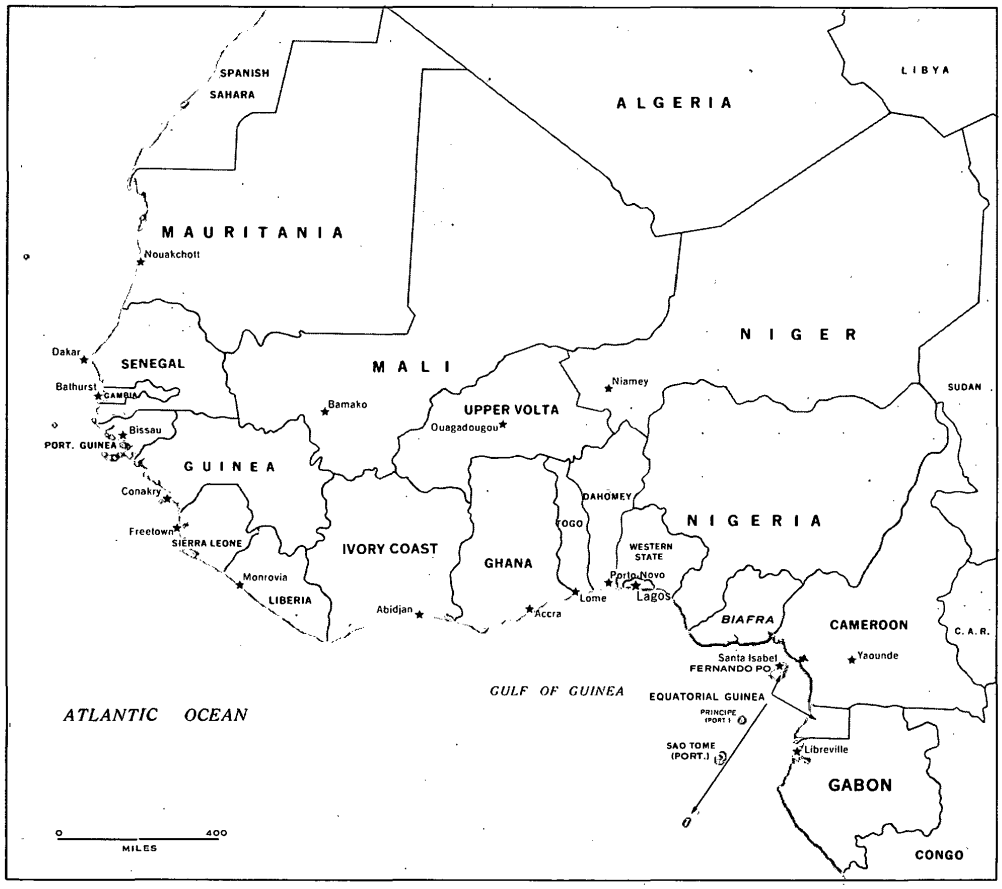

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ANNEX

NIGERIA

SIGNIFICANCE: Washington's efforts to steer clear of any direct involvement in the Nigerian civil war while implicitly supporting the principle of Nigerian unity has drawn the opprobrium of both sides in the struggle. The Soviet Union, posing as Nigeria's friend in need, has furnished considerable military materiel and gained points accordingly. The French, in a smaller way, have done likewise with the Biafrans. No end to the war is in sight, and mass starvation in Biafra seems probable in the coming months. As the situation worsens, the US will come under increasing pressure to provide humanitarian assistance which will, in turn, further reduce its influence in Lagos.

* * *

There is no sign of an early end to the 18-month-old war in Nigeria. Stiffened by increased quantities of arms reaching them over the French-facilitated air bridge from Gabon and Ivory Coast, the Biafrans have since September completely stalled the more powerful Federal armies. With the courage of their conviction that they face racial extermination if they lose, the Ibo tribesmen who predominate in Biafra are likely to go on fighting even if their remaining major population centers are captured. At the moment, neither side

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appears ready to break the four-month stalemate around the shrunken Biafran perimeter.

Despite the military stalemate and increased international pressure for peace negotiations, the federal authorities are as determined as ever to achieve a military victory, and prospects for a negotiated settlement remain dim. Federal leader Gowon in a New Year's Day speech said he may soon order a general mobilization, presumably to include conscription. Gowon is sensitive to an increasing war-weariness, particularly among Yoruba tribesmen in the Western State, and to frustration among the Nigerian war hawks. These latter tend to blame the prolongation of the war on Western, particularly US, support for Biafra, and have accused the US of embracing a policy of imperialism aimed at balkanizing Nigeria. Gowon himself probably does not believe this, but he is aware that there are those who do, and that they could threaten his own position should the stalemate continue. Yoruba war-weariness, a less personal danger to Gowon, is probably viewed by the Biafrans as justification of their strategy to hold on until internal strains cause the disintegration of the remainder of the Nigerian federation.

While the US has become more suspect in the eyes of many Nigerians, the USSR has been building a reputation as Nigeria's friend in need. The Soviets have furnished Nigeria with considerable military materiel, including

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some 25 jet fighter aircraft, and last November a Soviet military attaché took up residence in Lagos. Nigeria had for many years kept the Soviets at arm's length, and Gowon would probably have preferred to obtain his military supplies from Nigeria's traditional sources. As the demands of the war effort multiplied, however, the Nigerians found the British to be too slow in fulfilling their requirements, and the US has refused outright to issue permits for arms sales to Lagos.

The Soviets have increased their diplomatic presence in Nigeria since the civil war, and in November a Nigeria-USSR economic assistance agreement was signed. As the military stalemate forces Gowon even further toward "non-alignment," the Soviet position will be enhanced while the US and UK lose ground.

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The refugee problem resulting from the war will probably worsen within the next few months. The Ibo exodus

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that preceded the federal troops' advance on Biafra's cities has crammed some 7 million people into approximately 7,500 square miles, and starvation has become a serious problem. Nigeria has accepted the necessity of foreign participation in relief for the refugees, but most Nigerians probably disapprove of any relief to the Ibos, even the ICRC operation from Fernando Po, which was suspended earlier this month by Equatorial Guinea. The federal authorities strongly resent the activities of several independent relief agencies flying supplies from Sao Tome, from where some arms are also being flown to the Biafrans.

Federal sensitivity to relief activities was recently demonstrated when Gowon reacted strongly to the US provision of aircraft to relief agencies flying to Biafra. Gowon told the US ambassador in Lagos that this move was further evidence that the US is changing to a position of support for Biafra, and stressed that it could have "serious consequences" for US-Nigerian relations. Gowon probably wants continued good relations with the US, but he will almost certainly be faced with growing anti-US sentiment, both from jingoists seeking a scapegoat for the federal inability to win the war and from those genuinely fearful of US support for Biafra.

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